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ABSTRACT

Even the most intelligent children can have low rates of achievement if their natural abilities are not supported by effective study practices at home. The development of good study habits requires the guidance and firm supervision of a caring adult. The following suggestions should help parents guide their children in the development of good study habits: (1) set a definite time for study each day--the study time should not be interrupted by after-school activities, should have both a starting and ending time, and should be planned with the child's attention span in mind; (2) provide a proper place for study away from household distractions, one with adequate light and a proper writing surface; (3) provide materials needed for completing assignments; (4) require the child to organize school materials including study notes, assignment sheets, and homework papers; (5) require the child to make a daily list of homework assignments; and (6) provide support and guidance when the child becomes discouraged or frustrated with a difficult homework assignment. In general, the earlier a regular pattern of dealing with homework assignments can be established, the easier it will be on both the parent and the child. (DC)

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HELPING CHILDREN DEVELOP GOOD STUDY HABITS:
A PARENTS' GUIDE

By

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HELPING YOUR CHILD DEVELOP GOOD STUDY HABITS

- *Sammy received a grade of zero on his daily English homework assignment- he failed to do the work. When questioned about it, he explained that he had meant to do the assignment, but when he got ready to begin, he discovered that he had left his English book at school.
- *Even though Martha did every arithmetic problem on the page, and double-checked each one, she also received a failing grade on her homework assignment. She had completed the wrong page.
- *Susan had every intention of bringing up her science average by scoring high on her weekly test. However, when she settled down to study, she discovered that she had lost all but one page of science notes.
- *When the teacher reminded the class that their monthly book report was due the next morning, Michael mentally shrugged his shoulders. He knew there was no point in even choosing a book from the class library. There was no way he could possibly read it all and write the report by the next day.

The examples above probably sound all too familiar to many parents. Each child mentioned shares a common problem with many other school children- poor study habits. Even the most intelligent children can have low rates of achievement if their natural abilities are not supported by effective study practices at home. Unfortunately, the development of good study habits does not come naturally to most children. It requires the guidance and firm supervision of a caring adult.

Listed below are several suggestions which should help parents to guide their children in the development of good study habits, habits which should benefit the child throughout his years of education.

Set a definite time for study each school day. Try to plan a time which will not be interrupted by regular afterschool activities such as ball practice or music lessons.

The study period should have both a starting time and an ending time. If your child completes his homework before the study period is over, have him spend the rest of the time reading. By doing this, you will accomplish two things. First, the child will be discouraged from hurrying through his work in order to be free to play sooner. Second, regular reading provides learning experiences which will benefit him in all areas of school work.

When planning the length of the study period, keep the child's attention span in mind. Very young children will do much better if they have two short study periods with a break in between them rather than a longer single study time. All children will benefit from a break immediately after school before beginning their homework. Your child's teacher should be able to suggest the approximate length of time that should be needed to complete regular daily homework assignments.

Provide a proper place for study. The study area should be away from the distractions of normal household activities, television, stereo, toys, games, etc. Many children will argue that they can study better in front of the television or while listening to the radio. Actually, some children do learn better with some type of low level background noise. However, if a child is paying any attention at all to the sound or its source, then it is distracting him rather than aiding his concentration.

The study area should have adequate light and a writing surface of the correct height for the child. Neatness and legibility are greatly hampered when a child tries to do a writing assignment while stretched out on the floor or on a bed.

Provide materials needed for completing assignments. Most children in the lower grades will only need pencils, a pencil sharpener, and lined paper to complete all homework assignments. However, as children get older, special materials may be required, such as a ruler, graph paper, a pen, a dictionary, etc. When children reach the upper grades in elementary school, many will need access to reference materials such as an encyclopedia or an atlas. Since many homes do not have these materials, the local library will serve as an excellent resource.

Require your child to organize his school materials. Many children's schoolwork and grades suffer because of poor organization of materials which leads to lost study notes, misplaced assignments, and incomplete homework papers. A looseleaf notebook with dividers for different subjects is one of the best yet simplest ways to help a child organize his school materials. Some children are not naturally well organized, and frequent checks of their notebooks may be necessary before they learn to keep things in the proper place. Since young children usually bring home one or more printed worksheets to complete for homework, some provision must be made so the sheets will not fall out of their notebook and be lost. Either providing a hole puncher, so the worksheets can be fastened into the notebook, or having pockets inside the notebook to hold the loose sheets can solve this problem.

Require your child to make a daily list of homework assignments. Be sure your child has a specific place to write down all homework assignments each day. Many teachers list assignments on the chalkboard so the children can copy them. If your child does not always bring home a complete list every day, discuss the problem with his teacher. A teacher doesn't have time to copy the assignments for the child, but many are willing to check over the child's list at the end of the class period, and will initial it to signal parents that the list is correct.

When children begin to have long-range assignments, a blank calendar can be very helpful to them. They can list due dates, and then write in what needs to be done each day or week to complete the assignment on time.

Provide support when your child becomes discouraged. Children often experience frustration when trying to complete a difficult homework assignment. It does not help a child in the long run if you tell him the correct answers. However, if you show understanding of his difficulty, and can provide a clue or suggestion which will help him to figure the problem out for himself, he will learn to depend on his own abilities, and yet will be more likely to persevere.

Many times difficulty with a particular assignment arises from fatigue rather than a lack of understanding. In this case, taking a break from the problem assignment will help to reduce both confusion and frustration. If your child seems to be "bogged down" with one assignment and cannot seem to make any progress with it, suggest that he switch to another assignment for a while. Later, when he takes a fresh look at the difficult assignment, the solution will often become clear.

The suggestions above form a sound basis for the establishment of strong and effective daily study habits. In general, the earlier a regular pattern of dealing with homework assignments can be established, the easier it will be on both the parent and the child. If the pattern is set from the beginning of the school year, the child will be more likely to view it as a regular part of the school routine rather than as a form of punishment. Also, if habits are established from the beginning of the child's school career, he will be more able to deal effectively with the increased demands of each successive school year.